

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claim 24 and amend the claims as follows:

- DO NOT ENTER
9/7 12/1/04
1. (Currently Amended) A method of locating an item in a network of vending machines, comprising:
receiving, at a vending machine in the network of vending machines, a purchase order for the item, the vending machine being configured to dispense at least one type of item when stocked with the at least one item;
transmitting, via a network connection established through a network interface of the vending machine, a request for the item; and
receiving, at the vending machine, a response to the request indicative of whether the item is available at at least one other vending machine configured to dispense the item when stocked with the item, whereby a user can retrieve the item at the at least one other vending machine when the item is available at the at least one other vending machine.
 2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising outputting to the user, from an output device of the vending machine, an indication of the availability of the item at the at least one other vending machine.
 3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the transmitting comprises transmitting the request to the at least one other vending machine.
 4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein further comprising prior to transmitting, determining, by the vending machine, ~~determines~~ the availability of item at the vending machine, and if the item is not available at the vending machine, then transmitting the request.